

A TEACHING RESOURCE FOR ENGLISH EDUCATION IN JAPANESE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Instruction in English in elementary schools in Japan was mandated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2002 and is being rapidly implemented in schools across the nation. This paper describes the development of a Teaching Resource for use in teaching English in Japanese elementary schools. The Resource is based on almost a decade of teaching experience in Japanese schools by the author, the shared experience of colleagues, and the concepts derived from the published literature on language development and instruction. The content of the Resource is discussed within the framework of Ministry guidelines, is conceptually based and includes assumptions about children as learners, theme-based teaching, integration of the four skills and development of core activities. The Resource concludes with a detailed presentation of illustrative, theme-based teaching materials for first grade classes. The complete description for each of the themes covers such topics as language contained in the theme, core activity ideas and lesson plans.

ERIC Descriptors: second language learning, instructional materials, resource materials, vocabulary development, teacher-developed materials, elementary schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

With regard to the teaching of English in Japan, it has been said, “that in order to reform the English program effectively, there has to be a strong lead connecting English teaching from children all the way up to adults in order to have a complete and systematic approach to English education” (Nakata, 2001, ¶ 2). For a long time it has been felt that the approach taken in Japanese schools needed to be re-evaluated. Despite its long history with English education, Japan scores amongst the lowest of all other countries on the T.O.E.F.L. exam. In addition, it is difficult for Japanese businesses to find employees that can communicate successfully with their associates in other parts of the world. With reform in mind, English was officially introduced into the elementary course of study in April of 2002. This paper describes the impact of this decision on my teaching context, the rationale and concepts that underlie the essential elements of what I feel need to be included in an English program, and the teaching resource that I designed to meet these needs.

English has been a recognized subject in Japanese schools from the junior high school level onwards for a long time. Before April of 2002, English was also being taught at some, not all, elementary schools. Classes were held as something extra, much like a fieldtrip or special event and they were not an

official part of the elementary course of study. This was the situation when I began teaching in Japan in 1994, as a participant in the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program, assigned to teach at a junior high school as well as three elementary schools.

At the time, I had been trained to teach adults, and my only experience with teaching had been at an ESL program for newly arrived, highly motivated adult students in Canada. The job in Japan was quite a change for me on several levels. Students at the junior high school were twelve to fifteen years old and, in general, not as motivated to learn English as my previous students in Canada had been. English was just another class in their day at school. Teaching within the public school system also entailed other challenges such as: working within a set curriculum, using a prescribed textbook and being told to “teach communication” while my team teaching partner would “teach for the test”.

Once a week, I was sent to one of three elementary schools in the town to teach classes from the first to the sixth grade. My day there could be quite chaotic and exhausting as usually students from several grades were grouped together which sometimes meant a class in the gym with sixty children who generally, were very excited to see me because we only had class once a month. Despite this, these are the days that stay in my memory as being some of the most enjoyable of that year. I was given complete freedom to teach whatever I wanted and, while daunting at first, I grew to love the creativity that this involved. The students impressed me with their willingness to try and communicate and their unconditional enthusiasm for anything that I did, no

matter what the outcome. I began to feel a real sense of potential in terms of these classes evolving into a learning opportunity not only for the students, but for myself as well. I decided that teaching at the elementary level was an area where I wanted to direct my energies and explore further. This led to my decision to look for another job.

I moved to a new area of Japan and began to teach almost exclusively in elementary schools. I taught in four small schools with one class of four to twenty students in each grade. Although I rotated between schools and still taught each class only once a month, it was a set schedule with fewer students and I was able to get to know them better. Much of what I have learned has been through trial and error and observing my colleagues. My early lessons consisted of picking random “easy/simple” topics such as food, animals, greetings or colors, and then working with the language through playing games. The more I taught the more ideas I had and classes became a cycle of trying something new, observing what happened and then making adjustments. The time spent experimenting allowed me to gradually build a strong base of beliefs from which my ideas about how to teach children stem.

I have come to see that what I initially regarded as classes simply “done for fun” could become much more. I realized that even though students only have twelve classes a year, these classes are a vehicle through which I can serve their learning. Although it would be nice to have more class time, I think the quality of time we spend together has the greater impact, not the quantity. By organizing what I teach and how I teach, I can exploit the huge learning potential of my students by giving them a chance to move more deeply into or

beyond what I initially perceived as “easy/simple” topics and language.

The officially sanctioned introduction of English classes into elementary schools in April of 2002 was, and continues to be, the subject of much discussion. Some argue that English should not be taught to students younger than third grade as it may interfere with the development of their mother tongue. Others feel “the younger the better” given children’s capacity to learn languages more quickly and easily than older students. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MECSST) acknowledged that they would like to create a coordinated teacher training system and establish a national curriculum that all teachers can follow, which would help nurture students who would be able to communicate effectively in English. However, as of yet, neither a training system nor curriculum has been created. It has been left up to schools to decide who to teach and what to teach. Homeroom teachers for each grade, though few of them were trained as English teachers and some of them could not speak it, were given responsibility for teaching English classes.

It is my hope that in time, elementary English education in Japan will grow into a more coordinated and well-rounded program whose value is apparent for all to see. In general, for the time being, local boards of education are going forward with their own decisions and have implemented programs of their choosing. In terms of my teaching situation, the English program has largely been left up to me to decide and to implement with the support of the homeroom teachers.

My intent is to develop this teaching resource in the belief that real

learning can and should take place within the Ministry's loosely stated guideline that, "emphasis be placed on English terms that students encounter in their daily lives and the devising of activities that allow students to become familiar with English while having fun" (MECSST 2001: 124). This teaching resource is based on the principles of: linking learning to students' lives, having them take responsibility for their learning, addressing different learning styles, and integrating the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing in order to present language that is whole, real and relevant. It is intended to be a reference and source of information and support for teachers that work with me as well as the boards of education that I am employed by. Although developed for my specific context, I believe that this situation is not uncommon throughout Japan and that all or parts of this resource could be used effectively in other classroom settings.

The following chapters will develop the context within which English instruction in elementary schools is to be offered, the conceptual base and rationale which support the teaching resource, and illustrative materials, selected from the broad array I have developed, which illustrate the manner in which the teaching resource could be used in English instruction for students in Japanese elementary schools.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTEXT

In the revised guidelines for the elementary course of study, which became effective from April of 2002, the Ministry (MECSST) suggested a framework within which English classes could be held. The framework was created to offer support for an English program rather than a rigid structure. Local boards of education in Japan have the flexibility to implement these guidelines in any way that they choose. This means that factors such as what is to be taught, how often and to whom will vary depending on the school. These guidelines will be explained in relation to how the three boards of education that I work for have interpreted them. Factors that define my teaching context and impact the way that I teach will also be examined.

Guidelines

The elementary course of study was revised in order to allow individual schools more freedom to pursue “education initiatives”. Time was set aside for a class called “the period for integrated study” from third grade onwards. Basically, this is time that schools can use to teach “interdisciplinary and integrated learning” related to the perceived needs of students, schools and communities. Within the period for integrated study there is time allotted for

the subject of “international understanding” which includes the option of teaching foreign language conversation. The boards of education that I work for have decided that the foreign language taught should be English.

The basic goals of “international understanding” enumerated in general terms are as follows:

1. The fostering of open-mindedness and understanding, and development of respectful attitudes towards other cultures and these qualities.
2. That in order to do the above students must first better understand their own culture by looking at others.
3. The development of basic foreign language skills and the ability for self-expression and other communication skills for the purpose of expressing one’s thoughts and intentions while respecting others’ in an international society (MECSST 2001: 121).

It is also stated, that with regard to the development of basic foreign language skills, “activities should incorporate experiential learning, appropriate for elementary school age students, in which children are exposed to foreign language and familiarized with the culture and daily life of foreign countries” (MECSST 2001: 122). This is a general explanation of how English is to fit within the structure of the elementary course of study. Further guidelines provide greater detail regarding the content, type of activities and teaching methods. These will be discussed later in this paper.

Teaching Context

I teach at four elementary schools with student populations of between thirty and eighty-five students at each school. Students range in age from six to eleven years old. There are anywhere from four to twenty students per class. The schools are situated in three different villages and the students have a similar basic level of beginner English although actual levels of interest in studying it vary. Some students attend private English schools in a nearby city once a week but they are an exception and this is not common.

At each school I work with six homeroom teachers from the first through the sixth grades. Three schools require that the teachers come to English class and one does not. The teachers' level of interest and participation ranges from none to being fully involved. I plan all of the classes and some teachers team teach with me, others participate with the students, others are present in the classroom but do other work at their desks, and others do not come to class at all. It is their decision and this is not something that I have tried to change, although I would like to. The administration is split along the same lines. At two of the schools they are actively involved in the process of scheduling classes, asking to see what I have planned and training homeroom teachers. Another school is semi-involved and the fourth school has not approached the subject.

I am the first and only foreign teacher who has worked at these schools and their attitude towards my role is varied. Generally, this can be described as viewing me as anything from a special guest up to a qualified teacher who is fully involved in their school. I am hoping that through the recognition English

has received as being an official subject, and through making my teaching methods and plans more conceptually based and transparent, that I can continue to further develop my role at each school. I think it is important for me to create a network of support amongst native speaker teachers and Japanese homeroom teachers where ideas can be generated and shared in order to create a truly effective English program that addresses the needs of students, schools and the communities they serve.

At my schools, time set aside for English classes is largely determined by my schedule. Days have been divided amongst schools and within that, different grades. I see each class about twelve times per year, once a month for a forty-five minute period. I receive a yearly schedule of dates and classes at the beginning of the school year in April. The students are not told that they will be having English class until the day before. This is something that I would like to try to change so that English is seen less as a special event and more as an accepted and integral part of their school life. This is apparently also the intent of the new guidelines for English instruction.

As stated before with regard to what I teach, no set curriculum is available apart from the suggested guidelines outlined by the Ministry of Education. I have been given complete freedom to determine content and the means by which it is to be taught. As there is no prescribed textbook, I am responsible for finding my own resources and developing materials. The schools have not outlined any expectations other than that the students should have fun in English class, develop a liking for English and a desire to communicate, and be able to use simple conversational phrases by the time

they finish the sixth grade. However, I feel that many of the students can and want to be able to do more than this. The teaching resource provides information that can be used to instruct students enabling them to focus on materials, topics, and activities in which they can be fully engaged, build on their own language resources and realize what they have learned.

Challenges

The fact that I work in a low structure context is both a reward and a challenge. The rewards come from the fact that I have freedom over content, materials and method. Although choosing content and developing materials can be time consuming, it has also allowed me to work effectively with one of my biggest challenges, that of lack of contact hours. I can design material and organize content that fits into the amount of time that I have been given.

Through the content that I have chosen and the materials that I use, I have been able to develop continuity and strike a balance between recycling language and introducing new language. Students are motivated both by the engagement that new challenges provide and the security and confidence that is generated when encountering recycled language in a new form.

A further challenge is the students' apparent lack of need to learn English as there is no cause for them to use it outside of the classroom. This creates varying levels of interest and participation in class. One of the ways that I have tried to address this is by expanding English class beyond the guideline that it be merely "fun for the students". They need to be provided with opportunities for learning that engage as well as motivate them. This can

be achieved through connecting what they are learning to their lives. Also, through creating lessons and activities that address different learning styles, each student may have an opportunity to learn in a way that suits them. It is my hope that respecting the uniqueness of each student will allow them to participate in English class on a level and in a way that is both motivating and beneficial for them.

One final challenge of my context is the fact that when I am not present at the school, English is not either. After I complete the monthly lesson and leave school, students usually do not speak, hear or see much English until our next lesson a month later. It is this format that keeps English in an outside place, seen as a special subject that is far removed from students' daily lives. English needs to become a part of their lives, however small, beyond the classroom. If they were to begin linking it with themselves rather than me, this would create more interest in learning, and they could develop a deeper awareness of their relationship to English. Opportunities for students to encounter English outside of class need to become an integral part of any elementary school program.

The framework is in place to make English a recognized part of the elementary course of study. It is flexible enough that each local board of education may develop a program that suits their needs. In terms of my context, this means having a program that will allow students to enjoy English while creating both a desire to learn and a will to communicate. In order to do this, there are several challenges that must be met: working with infrequent and limited contact hours, students' lack of need to learn English, varying

levels of participation and interest and the isolated position that English occupies in students' lives. By working with the strengths presented by my context while meeting the challenges that lie within, an effective English program that serves both the learners and the learning can be implemented.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHING RESOURCE – CONCEPTUAL BASE AND RATIONALE

In order to organize my teaching and take full advantage of the freedom I was given to design an English program, I developed a teaching resource. Its purpose was to help put a framework in place for the creation of an English program that motivated and engaged students, linked the language to their lives and interests, and provided opportunities for them to hear, speak, read and write it in an integrated way, while experiencing its application and use in a meaningful context. Weaver very succinctly supports the ideas contained in the teaching resource when she proposes:

Language and literacy are best developed when language (oral or written) is not fragmented, but kept whole; when listening and speaking and reading and writing are not isolated for study, but permeate the whole curriculum; when students are encouraged and allowed to develop language and literacy as they engage in authentic language/literacy events; and when the whole curriculum, instead of being isolated from the perceived needs, thoughts and feelings of students, is integrated with their whole lives (Weaver 1990: 30).

The rationale and concepts that underlie the essential elements of what I feel need to be included in an English program are described in this chapter.

Reference is also made to some of the content and method guidelines outlined by the Ministry (MECSST). These guidelines have been developed further and incorporated into the teaching resource.

Assumptions about Children as Learners

It is important to begin by explaining my assumptions about children as learners since such assumptions form the foundation of my beliefs about how and what I should teach. These assumptions are based on observations and experiences during the eight years that I have been teaching children in Japan, and on the studies and research that I have undertaken during this time. When the term “children” is used I am referring to five to eleven year olds.

Children are generally enthusiastic and willing to try. Even though they may be restricted by their experience and knowledge of the world it does not mean that they are incapable or lacking in ability. They will try to understand and create meaning from that which is around them. The classroom should be a place where a climate of equality is created and where differences between teacher and student are not emphasized. Thus, they both become learners. While the students learn, the teacher should be learning about how they learn. Teachers should respect students for being children rather than try to control them because they are. In such a climate of equality children can be given the chance to develop self-control and responsibility for their learning.

Often during class I have found myself getting nervous when I sense that students may not be understanding what we are doing. Usually, the first reaction is to take care of them, to jump in and to catch them before they fall. However, doing this tends only to help make children forget that they are capable of learning without me. The instinct to help is only feeding that which is hampering them. Teachers must learn when to wait and to develop respect for children’s innate ability to learn. It is through this that children can

continue to use and to preserve their inner resources and view themselves as competent and capable.

It is important that the materials and content of an English program for children match their developmental stages. It is unreasonable to ask children to do in their second language what they are not yet able to do in their first. The language being taught needs to be available to them in their first language before it can be constructed in a second. When this is the case, schema building and making use of the children's background knowledge and imagination helps to create meaning and implies respect for their ability to learn. As children have learned their first language they have already experienced using their ability to make connections. It is important to give them the opportunity to be made aware of and to re-connect with knowledge that they either consciously or unconsciously possess. This helps to construct the initial paths to access meaning and builds the framework for re-visitation through using what they know to understand the unknown. Even with young learners, many of the concepts are already in place. What is needed in many cases, are just the words.

Working in small, doable steps is also an essential part of working with children. If the students work in small steps they can experience the joy of self-discovery and the joy that is present in learning itself. They lose interest as well as their attention and motivation if the tasks are too difficult. They usually will not admit to not understanding and will not ask questions to clarify meaning. A teacher must be able to step back and look closely at what they are asking the students to do in any given activity. Cameron suggests, it is

important to think about whether the children have had experience with the thinking skills involved and the skills required to complete the activity (2001: 19). The promise of security is embedded in both the idea of working within the children's skill level and in small doable steps. Working in a secure environment lets children participate at a level where they feel comfortable and can be productive. It gives them an opportunity to contribute what they know and shows them that they are believed in and respected.

For children, learning is a multi-sensory experience. The more senses that are involved in each lesson the more ways they will have to access the language, construct meaning, build the criteria for accessing it again and then retaining it. Movement, gestures, facial-expression, tone of voice, visuals and demonstrations can also help enhance meaning. By keeping in mind the uniqueness of each child, activities and lessons can be planned that help children learn through all of their senses and through the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In doing this, students are able to work with their strengths and to build on their weaknesses and are presented with choices about the way that they can learn. They are more likely to participate, remain interested, stay motivated and be free from the fear of failure if they know that there is something in the lesson in which they can truly become engaged and invest themselves.

The satisfaction that comes from teaching children can be felt almost immediately. Their energy and eagerness is passed on to those around them. Teachers need to provide a variety of experiences that appeal to their imaginations and different capabilities. It is important to remember that even

though they are children, they bring with them a wealth of knowledge and, if given the opportunity, become active doers and thinkers.

Theme-Based Teaching

The content of what I teach is organized thematically. There is one main theme, four units that come out of the main theme and smaller sub-topics within each of these. The primary reason for choosing this method is that thematic teaching provides flexibility in terms of content. “Themes begin from an overarching topic or idea that can branch out in many different directions, allowing children to pursue personal interests through the foreign language” (Cameron 2001: 159). This in turn aids in connecting learning to the students’ backgrounds and lives. It is essential for my students to have this connection as they have no apparent need to learn English and will probably not use it outside of the classroom. Trying to teach students through a needs related focus becomes irrelevant. It is the theme and related topics that they learn which will take on the most importance and create a desire to communicate, to share understanding and provide reasons for using the language.

The flexibility of a theme allows one to personalize topics to fit the context and work with and arrange material according to what is happening in students’ lives. Cameron emphasizes that, what children have had experience of and know about the physical world serves as their entry point to learning and from this come vocabulary and concepts (2001: 80). These entry points can be expanded and vocabulary and concepts continued to be built upon by always working from the known to the unknown, from the familiar, such as topics

centered on the self, to the less familiar which may include topics connected to the community and beyond. This follows the Ministry's stated guideline, "It is necessary to listen to what students say and to observe what they do in their daily lives, determine where their interests lie in their own environment and in their daily lives at home and at school, and include such items in the lessons" (MECSST 2001: 126).

Themes provide a framework of understanding and support for language learning. Language is learned in small pieces that are part of a meaningful whole that provides context and cohesion. The language learned and the skills developed are connected to the topics in the theme and these connections can help aid memory and recall. In addition to this, topics are not only linked to each other but to the students' lives as well. It provides a double layer of connections that can help them internalize the language. The more connections that can be created, the more chance there is for students to access the language again.

The theme and the topics within it also generate an emotional response from students where they will need language in order to express themselves. This provides opportunities to work with language and ideas that the students have generated. According to the Ministry's guidelines, "it is important to address what students want to say not the English that instructors want to teach" (MECSST 2001: 127). Due to the organic nature of student-generated language, it can increase motivation and build a deeper connection between the students and their learning.

An extension of this is the idea of student choice. As the content of

themes can be easily expanded and changed, places where students can choose what they want to learn can be built into the program. Even when working with the time restrictions and low contact hours within my teaching context, opportunities for choice present themselves. Small choices can be built into topics by having students choose the language that they want to work with, the activity that they want to do, or a smaller sub-topic that they want to work on. This gives them a greater role in taking responsibility for their learning.

Sometimes, using a theme can seem unfocused because all of the language is not set in advance and activity outcomes can be unpredictable. It is important to be aware and take advantage of learning opportunities as they arise in order to maximize learning for time spent. Teachers must be clear about what the goals are for any given activity, why the students are doing it, and what the possible learning outcomes are. When used effectively, themes build connections to language through a wide range of topics that are personally meaningful to students.

Integrating the Four Skills

The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing need to be worked with at the same time, always staying with meaning and context, in order to build a whole view of language that makes sense. Integrating the skills enables students to find different ways to access language, construct meaning, and build the criteria for accessing it again to ultimately retain it. From the outside, if the mind is focused on the same language it can appear to be repetitious. However, if the language is moved through the four skill areas the learner stays

actively engaged. This variation and shifting of focus becomes meaningful practice. If students practice skills in isolation meaning is lost. Skills should be worked on as the need arises, in support of one another, in a meaning centered whole. The skills are not the goals themselves but working on them in this way accomplishes the larger goal of learning about language through language. Again, the uniqueness of each student is the central focus as this allows different skills to become entry and exit points for working with the language in a way that works for them.

The Ministry's guidelines emphasize, even though communication takes place primarily through verbal and written means, asking elementary school students to communicate using both is too much and may cause them to develop a dislike for English. As such, activities should focus on the hearing and speaking of simple English terms that students know from their daily lives (MECSST 2001: 124). What is of importance here is not the introduction of English through both verbal and written means, but the manner in which it is introduced. As will be outlined later, teaching children through writing does not have to mean having them study grammar and syntax and write out passages in English. In an elementary classroom, writing is another way of letting children access language and construct meaning.

The way in which the four skills are introduced and integrated has an impact on learning. The introduction of skills other than listening and speaking need not become too demanding. When worked with in context as part of a meaningful whole, they support language learning and help to address different learning styles within each classroom. In effect, concentration solely on spoken

English may cause students to become frustrated and to develop a dislike for it.

This is not to say that spoken English is not of prime importance in the elementary school classroom. “For young learners, spoken language is the medium through which the new language is encountered, understood, practiced and learnt [sic]. Rather than oral skills being simply one aspect of learning language, the spoken form in the young learner classroom acts as the prime source and site of language learning” (Cameron 2001: 18). While spoken language may then be the prime source of language learning, it is not the only source and the introduction of the other skills can help support and reinforce the learning that takes place both orally and aurally. It is important to start a child’s language learning journey off with a positive expectation by showing and treating them like they will learn to read, write, speak and listen to English. Separating the skills and only including two of the four, tells children that learning in an integrated way is too difficult and that they will not be able to do it. In the balance of this section, the manner in which the four skills can be effectively and positively integrated into the elementary school English class will be outlined.

Emergent Literacy

Children learn through using all of their senses, the greater the variety of ways they can use to learn something, the more chance there is that it will remain with them. “In learning to read and write, children have to make links from meaning to what they see (printed text), what they hear (the spoken language) and what they produce (written words). To assist the building and

strengthening of all these various sorts of mental connections, we can use a range of modes and senses” (Cameron 2001: 142). As a simple example, there is little point in teaching students the names of the letters of the alphabet in a song. Although this may be fun, it is an isolated experience that has little value in terms of learning. It would be more valuable to have students partake in a fuller language learning experience like creating a student-generated alphabet. In this way, they could experience seeing letters, writing them, making them, learning the sounds, listening to the sounds, using their hands and bodies to make the shapes, experience pride of ownership over letters that they created, and slowly learn words that connected to each letter.

As a result of using these types of activities all of the senses and skills will be worked with. The activity is meaning centered and the students have had fun while being able to build a large network of connections and skills that they can use to build on language. The language is consistent with their developmental level and they have had an opportunity to express themselves.

Classroom atmosphere and environment can have a great impact on literacy, as well as being a source of indirect learning. If students are immersed in a literate environment, they will begin to think of themselves as emergent readers and writers and develop a positive attitude. By doing this, language development is encouraged and positively reinforced all around students both through what they hear and say as well as what they are seeing. Again, the four skills are present as an integrated whole.

Japanese elementary school classrooms are usually rich environments in terms of visual stimulation. For my students, where the classroom could

likely be the only place where they can see printed material in English, the environment takes on an important role. To provide stimulation and promote noticing English, a good idea is to present English in as many places as you can in the form of posters, visuals with labels, messages, books, magazines and anything else that seems appropriate. Students can begin to “read” what is around them using prior knowledge and visual support. Although at first this “reading” will be comprised of seeing and recognizing, the students will eventually begin to view themselves as readers rather than as non-readers.

Children love books. They like being read to and they like looking at books whether it is just the pictures or reading the text as well. If they like a book they will usually want to hear it or read it many times. They will begin to understand the whole meaning of the story, learn parts of it by heart, and then internalize this language and make it their own. Gradually, students’ attention can be focused from a broad meaning based level to words, and then to a letter/sound level. Through this, oral skills and reading become integrated and support each other.

During this time the youngest students may merely get practice with reading-like activities such as holding books, turning pages, reading from left to right, recognizing their favorite parts of the story and “reading” the pictures. All of these activities are valuable and add to their confidence and perception of themselves as learners of English. No matter what level students are engaged in reading and writing at, it is important to note that they are given “the opportunity to engage in the processes of reading and writing, even when their “reading” as yet involves only reconstructing a story from text and pictures, or

their “writing” consists only of putting letter-like marks on paper to express their thoughts” (Weaver 1990: 23).

Using Stories

Using books also creates other opportunities for language development. “The context created by the story, its predictable pattern of events and language, and pictures, all act to support listeners’ understanding of unfamiliar words. Children will pick up words that they enjoy, and, in this way, stories offer space for growth in vocabulary” (Cameron 2001: 163). In order for students to fully benefit from the story, it is important that any previous knowledge they have surrounding the topic is discussed. New words and ideas that are central to understanding the meaning should be pre-taught. This activates students’ interest, motivates them to listen and increases their attention span.

Stories can be read for fun. Having students listen to a story, understand the meaning and enjoy it can be a goal in itself. Stories involve students’ emotions and allow them to use their imaginations and what they know of the world to help create meaning. They also expose them to aspects of other cultures. This includes the obvious, such as people or places, to more abstract ideas like behaviors. The more a book is read, the more opportunity a teacher has to take language out to focus on. Students may notice things that they did not the first time because they have already understood the meaning and can begin to concentrate on the details. Vocabulary can be reactivated, taken out and put into different contexts, or broken down and the parts worked

with. Ideas contained in stories can be developed through having students retell the story in a simplified version or predict what might happen to characters. Using books is a very flexible way to work with large pieces of language, in context, where meaning is supported by visuals and the surrounding words. They provide many opportunities for language to be worked with in each skill area.

Student-Generated Textbooks

Part of the time that the students spend in English class is devoted to the creation and use of a student-generated text. Each student begins creating a text in the first grade and develops and adds to it until the end of the sixth grade. The texts are collections of anything that is meaningful to the students that they want to express in English. This can include both language that has come out of lessons, or language that students have asked about on their own. There are many kinds of visuals, either hand drawn, cut out of magazines or photographs. In the lower grades there are usually markings, single letters or short words to go along with the pictures or just the pictures themselves. As students get older the writing gets more complex but it is developed at the student's pace and at a level with which they are comfortable. Once the students become familiar with the idea of creating the text they are able to devote more time to it outside of the classroom and use me as a resource on the days when I am at their school.

As previously mentioned, writing can be used as a way to recycle and reinforce language and concepts that have been introduced orally/aurally. "It

adds another physical dimension to the learning process. Hands are added to eyes and ears” (Scott and Ytreberg 1990: 69). For some students, this is a needed dimension in the way they learn. Writing activities for children should reflect their world. This will allow them to write what is meaningful to them thereby expressing their personality. The content is the most important part of a child’s writing and even if what they’ve written is not clear they should be encouraged to read it back in order to continue to develop their view of themselves as a reader/writer.

The use of the student-generated text is based on the idea that “children grow and learn most readily when they actively pursue their own learning” (Weaver 1990: 22). Creating the text facilitates the students’ ability to build connections to the language while staying with meaning and context. Students learn what they want to learn best and most easily and they tend to remember what they have written. What they bring to the text and what they put into the creation of it allows them to be involved in their learning and take responsibility for it. Through producing, sharing and peer teaching their texts, each student is allowed to make use of their knowledge and recognize the learning in themselves. Learning in this way is engaging and aids retention at a much deeper level.

Student-generated text is intended to be a means by which students can creatively develop and record an organic vocabulary of their choosing but is not intended to be the only source of language. A student-generated text should be “a regular flow of organic words which are captions to the pictures in the mind” (Ashton-Warner 1963: 49). The desire to learn English must first be built on

an organic basis that can later be integrated into a mainstream curriculum. This is “the key that unlocks the mind and releases the tongue” (Ashton-Warner 1963: 41) and fits with the idea of the students working from the known to the unknown in language development.

Over time, if used consistently, a student-generated text becomes a source of early reading development. Weaver suggests initial emphasis is on content and meaning. Gradually, learners move from the whole to parts and form is worked with (1990: 107). Working with written forms enhances language development. Helping students notice the form of a word, such as letters, shapes and the sounds involved, aids understanding at a deeper level. They cannot truly learn a word by working with meaning alone. Using a step by step approach helps students move beyond word recognition and slowly begin to read what they have written.

A final component of working with student-generated texts is the need to make them public. When an audience is involved, more effort and care is put into creation. Learners derive motivation and satisfaction from being able to write what they want, see it in print and share meaning with others. The texts are books, and books are made to be read whether this be to friends, parents or teachers. Activities where texts are shared should become part of the routine of an English class.

Phonics

The Ministry’s guidelines state, “students should become accustomed to the sounds of English by listening to plenty of spoken English” (MECSST 2001:

126). This is a start to developing an understanding of the English sound system but not the only thing that is needed. There is no correlation between hearing more and learning more. English needs to be broken down into syllables, sounds and letters and worked with in each skill area in order for its sound system to be more fully understood.

Working with words gives students a fuller sense of how the sound system works. Teachers can move from a set of visuals that students have associated with words, to gradually matching written words with pictures. This leads to matching written words with words students hear, and then writing words. Written words can be broken up and individual sounds and letters worked with. In this way, students work from a whole to parts, staying with meaning and context. They use listening, speaking, reading, writing and any prior knowledge they have to help develop a deeper awareness of sound/letter relationships. Being able to read and write a word is just as valuable as being able to say it because these skills develop interdependently. Seeing written words helps pronunciation because the form is visible and students can see how sounds relate to letters and what happens to sounds if letters are changed. Although this method takes time, working on small pieces frequently is very useful. Phonics is then worked with intrinsically, taught as needed, and always in context.

Activities

Halliwell emphasizes, teachers can help students own the language by basing activities on their natural capacities and instincts. When they can

respond emotionally and physically to an activity, the language is integrated with their personality and this gives them a sense of ownership over it. Developing positive attitudes towards languages, language learning and the content of what they are learning, gives students a reason to invest in it. By having real language used as part of the process of language learning rather than the product of it students develop a need to communicate and make the language their own (1992: 9).

The Ministry's guidelines state, the primary purpose of English activities is to "foster interest and desire – not to teach a language" (MECSST 2001: 123). If developed and presented effectively, activities can accomplish both of these goals. There is no need to make them mutually exclusive. In order to achieve this, activities must be doable yet challenging. They must be fun, yet maximize learning for time spent. A lot of learning comes from an activity that has game-like qualities. Sometimes, more fun than learning comes out of an activity that is a game. Teachers must consider the type of activity that they are going to use and the language and skills that are required from students. If one of these factors is too complicated, no learning will take place.

Developing a set of Core Activities

Halliwell enumerates and provides broad detail for five categories of activities by the different responses they require from learners:

1. Activities that link understanding to an active response. Students will have to process language and do something as a result of what they hear.

2. Activities that involve guessing. These types of activities give students a reason to recycle language, respond to a challenge and stimulate questions.
3. Activities that involve the use of movement in meaningful and real language practice. These activities exploit the desire to move and be active.
4. Activities that increase the students' level of engagement by giving them a need/reason to remember what they are hearing, saying, reading or writing. These activities use memory to create communication.
5. Activities that engage students by requiring both language use and thinking. These activities give students mental space for generating and organizing ideas that help them make language their own (1992: 40-95).

These categories are an effective way for teachers to group activities according to what they want students to experience and what learning outcomes they wish to achieve.

In order to simplify lessons, reduce preparation time and reuse materials and ideas, Halliwell suggests developing a core of activity ideas that can be reused with different language content. Using the same types of activities to teach different content provides security for students because they know what to expect. If students are comfortable with the format of an activity they concentrate more on language and have more confidence. Gradually, the teacher can do more of the set-up in the foreign language and take advantage of

opportunities for indirect learning. Halliwell points out that teachers can find ways to adjust individual activities so that they may be used to calm or energize a class, and provide both mental involvement and physical occupation (1992: 38). Activities can be developed for each of the previously listed categories. This gives teachers a well-rounded set of core activities that work with all of the skills and senses and address a variety of learning outcomes.

Aspects of Working with Activities

A set of core activities also enables a teacher to provide variation in a lesson. Varying activities keeps students engaged by working with different skills and senses, and allows language to be recycled. Recycling language creates a secure atmosphere where students can focus and build confidence. By giving students an opportunity to examine language at a deeper level, recycling plays an important role in learning. When children first encounter language, they use all of their resources to try to understand the meaning. As it is recycled and exposure to it increases, their mind is freed to move beyond the meaning and notice other aspects of it.

Cameron proposes, “Learners need to notice the details of how the foreign language works, from the inside of words up to the large units of stories or descriptions. They need to incorporate this knowledge through use, and to be able to use the knowledge in their own communication” (Cameron 2001: 242). Competence is built by working on language using controlled activities with a focus on form, and activities that allow room for freer practice, where students can experiment with the language. As they work with the language in

different ways and situations, their knowledge expands from the use of it in the original context to related ones. The chunks of language that they learned are broken down and then reconstructed using different words. It is this continual reconstruction of language that deepens understanding and leads to internalization.

In order for learners to progress towards internalization, activities must also be worked on in manageable pieces. Cameron emphasizes, teachers need to set goals for activities. They must think about what they want students to be able to do by the end of the activity. These goals can then be broken into sub-goals each one comprising a small doable step (2001: 28-29). Having learners work in small steps gives them support for completing challenges. This ensures that learning takes place. It also allows the teacher to gather evidence of learning as students move through the task and then make adjustments accordingly. In this way, language learning is “a repeated process of stretching resources slightly beyond the current limit into the . . . space for growth, consolidating new skills and then moving on to the next challenge” (Cameron 2001: 28).

In addition to breaking down an activity into small, doable steps, teachers should vary the pace, groupings, skills and emotions involved in activities so that students remain engaged. Certain types of activities can be used to calm a class. Other types can be used to energize students. Activities that move from the whole class to small group or individual work, where students are both mentally and physically involved, have the most potential for maximum engagement and language development. Moving to small group or

individual work shifts the focus from the teacher to students. It allows each student to work in a way that they prefer, either alone, with friends, or with the teacher.

If paying attention to the manner in which students prefer to work helps learning, so will examining the ways in which they learn. Lessons should be structured to give students a chance to do activities where they can learn both directly and indirectly. Halliwell emphasizes, direct learning focuses on form and accuracy and the mind is engaged with the language. Indirect learning focuses on making meaning and more spontaneous and fluent language use. This means that the mind is engaged on the task rather than the language. Students should have chances to learn both ways and need a clear understanding of which is required in any given activity (1992: 5-6).

Using activities where an element of guessing is involved serves the learning on several levels. It gives students practice with risk taking and finding the courage to try again. It lets them become comfortable with ambiguity by showing them that the activity is doable even when they do not understand everything. All of these factors help build students' confidence in themselves and in their ability to make meaning from partial understanding.

Building opportunities for language choice into activities also helps increase confidence and make them personally meaningful for learners. It allows them to participate at a level that is comfortable for them. To allow for choice in a limited amount of time, teachers can design a framework within which students can choose. Students are given more control over their learning and can exercise initiative in their language choice. This can be as simple as

students choosing their favorite food instead of being given a set of foods to remember. It could be a more complex activity such as having them draw a picture of “summer” for a student-generated text and instructing them to draw what they want to talk about.

There are many different aspects involved in working with activities. Teachers should provide a variety of activities by changing the pace, groupings, skills, formats and emotions involved. Language needs to be recycled consistently in order to allow students chances to work with form as well as use. If they work in small steps, learn both directly and indirectly and have choice over their language, they are more likely to retain it. By being aware of all of these factors when selecting and implementing activities, teachers can acknowledge the differences that lie within students and develop lessons that address their needs.

Deliberate Language Choice

A further element that must be examined with regard to activities is the language used in them and related to them. This involves use of the first language in the classroom as well as maximizing use of the foreign language. One way that foreign language use can be maximized is by making classroom language part of the learning experience. This encompasses language used in daily routines and instructions. This language is repetitive, always in context, familiar and broken down into small chunks that students work with step by step. All of these factors aid comprehension and provide students with the challenge of predicting meaning within the security of a familiar routine. As

language is repeated again and again it is recycled and reinforced. As students begin to understand the meaning and internalize it, it can be expanded and built on.

Learning classroom language provides motivation as well as opportunities for use. “The truest form of real language use is to use the language being learned as a tool for other tasks and other learning” (Halliwell 1992: 14). For students who do not use the foreign language outside of the classroom, providing a need for use is important. Scott and Ytreberg suggest viewing language as a tool helps learners progress from dependence to independence. They learn how to take responsibility, ask for more information, request help when they do not understand, accomplish tasks and seek the help of others. This aids their development as learners and their ability to communicate meaningfully in the classroom (1990: 17). It is a valuable source of indirect learning that teachers should remain aware of.

There are a variety of opinions concerning the use of the first language in the classroom. Some feel that classes should be done completely in English as children have a very limited amount of time for exposure to the foreign language. Others feel that because of the limited amount of time, classes done only in English are frustrating and unrealistic for both teacher and student. The Ministry’s guidelines emphasize that Japanese should be kept to a minimum as it is important for the students to experience the feeling of knowing that they understand generally what is being said even if they do not understand all of the details (MECSST 2001: 143). The Ministry’s point is important as it achieves a balance between differing opinions.

What language should be used in the classroom is not a debate between use of the first and the foreign language. It is a matter of consciously choosing a language in order to maximize learning. Cameron proposes that by guiding teaching with the principle of deliberate language choice, the students' learning is kept at the center as the goal then becomes using as much of the target language as possible, and ensuring that use of the first language supports the children's language learning (2001: 199).

In the classroom there are effective ways of integrating the first language into lessons. It is important that its use is not seen as a quick way to get results by translating when students do not understand. It can be used as a way to check comprehension or help increase students' understanding over time. For example, if there are complex instructions for an activity, Cameron suggests students could be given one set in the first language and a parallel set in the foreign language. As the activity is used again and the instructions are repeated, less of the first language could be used and the foreign language increased. If instructions are given in the foreign language and students need help understanding, teachers could have students that understood explain to others in the first language (2001: 211). This is student centered, lets them take responsibility and provides a check of understanding.

Teachers and students choose the way they communicate in the classroom and what language they use. Over time, these choices build into patterns and reflect the way that language is used in lessons and regarded outside of the classroom. Teachers should think about the types of patterns they want to build and the way they wish the foreign language to be viewed. If

the foreign language is used only in the classroom, only for the lesson and then disappears until the next lesson, it is seen as a subject for study. If it is used both in and out of lessons daily, as a means of communication or displaying information, it becomes part of the students' lives. There does not have to be a lot of time spent using it. It could amount to only a few minutes a day when there is no lesson. The most important thing is that students see it, hear it or use it and see others doing the same.

Deliberate language choice lets teachers develop routines in the classroom that support learning, maximize learning for time spent and use the first language as a resource. It also creates an atmosphere in the classroom where students can become comfortable with ambiguity while knowing that use of the first language is not considered bad or forbidden.

Multiple Intelligences

It is important to consider ways to increase participation and interest amongst students who have no clear need for learning English so that opportunities for learning will also increase. One of the ways this can be done is by addressing different learning styles. Nicholson-Nelson proposes, "Students need to draw on different intelligences and ways of learning and presenting information to truly understand the topics they are studying" (Nicholson-Nelson 1998: 76). By incorporating the multiple intelligences into a variety of activities throughout lessons, students will have chances to learn in ways that suit them. They can begin to understand the ways in which they learn best, and also have opportunities to improve the way they learn using other styles. Learning in this

way, has an emotional impact.

Nicholson-Nelson utilizes Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences (1983), these include: verbal-linguistic, math-logic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. Nicholson-Nelson feels, as did Gardner, that by using the theory of multiple intelligences, educators could be helped to: develop desired capabilities and talents in students, approach a concept, subject matter, or discipline in a variety of ways, and personalize education by recognizing human differences (1998: 10). There are many categories of intelligences and many ways of incorporating them into activities. It is impossible for teachers to cover all of them in each lesson. However, by being aware of them, teachers can include them when they fit time, materials and content. This ensures that over time, students will have chances to learn in many different ways.

Vocabulary Development

"Learning words is a cyclical process of meeting new words and initial learning, followed by meeting those words again and again, each time extending knowledge of what the words mean and how they are used in the foreign language" (Cameron 2001: 74). Children are still developing concepts and vocabulary in their first language that limits what they can do in a second language. Their experience of the world will serve as the entry point for their vocabulary development. As they become older, and vocabulary is recycled and encountered in different ways, new conceptual and word knowledge is added that helps increase understanding. Vocabulary encountered in activities needs

to be worked with through different skill areas, across topics, and from one year to the next. As this is done, connections to each word become more complex and it is slowly internalized, recalled and then used.

Children's understanding of words moves from the concrete to the abstract. The first time they encounter a word, understanding the meaning is helped by activating schema related to it. Students' prior knowledge influences how they comprehend things and how they make meaning. This knowledge should be respected and used to build comprehension and serve learning. They can be asked what they know about a word or topic or what it makes them think of. Sometimes, schema will be related concepts and words from the first language. As knowledge increases, these will be in place in the second language. By doing this, students use their resources to build a link from the initial meaning/idea to related ones, and vocabulary is extended. The more learners have to think to understand a word, the more likely they are to be able to recall it.

Learning a word should not be thought of as either "yes, I have learned it" or "no, I have not". It is a long process where knowledge is continually built, deepening understanding of a word on different levels. Initially, students recognize a word they hear and understand the meaning. As it is encountered again, understanding is more fully developed by working with the form of the word, using it and then being able to produce it automatically. Vocabulary development is essential in order for students to be able to take part in discourse. In addition to this, they are able to learn new vocabulary while taking part. This is in keeping with the idea of always teaching language in

context as part of a meaningful whole.

Teacher's Role

Activities need to be accessible yet challenging for students. The teacher's role in this can be seen as a cycle of putting a challenge into circulation, seeing what is happening, accepting what is happening and responding in a way that serves learning. It is important to remain neutral and connect to where students' learning is instead of where you want it to be. If the teacher's concern is misplaced on themselves and what they think they should be doing, then they will keep teaching even when students do not understand.

Teachers should develop an awareness of waiting, and let the learning sit before they feed it. They need to be ready to make small shifts or adjustments as they get evidence of learning. In order to respond to students' needs it is important to get evidence as you go, not at the end. This is a form of informal assessment that helps a teacher decide what changes they need to make. Sometimes, it is hard to predict what will be learned from what is being taught. Teachers can facilitate learning by being attentive to opportunities that are presented during class when students demonstrate a readiness or need to learn.

In order to help students recognize their learning, teachers should be aware of how they use praise in the classroom. By praising students we are conditioning them to look for rewards and helping them lose the ability to praise themselves. If students are praised even when they are not making an effort, they will recognize that it has no meaning. With constant praise, they do

not develop the criteria to judge whether or not it is correct. However, if praise is given in the form of supportive feedback, when it is deserved, students will develop the ability, they already possess, to assess their own efforts.

As well as helping them develop an ability to assess, teachers can increase students' awareness of how to self-correct. The Ministry's guidelines state, "it is sufficient for the teacher to restate correctly the expression to let the students hear the correct English. As much as possible, teachers should guide students in a manner that encourages them to recognize their mistakes by themselves and to try to use the expression correctly next time" (MECSST 2001: 138). To help students take responsibility for their learning, it is important to make use of corrective feedback where mistakes are seen as tools for further learning and the students' ability to self-correct is developed. In order to do this, teachers can go beyond restating the expression correctly by responding to students in a fuller sentence. This gives students access to correct language as well as opportunities for noticing related items and words that make use of indirect learning and enhance language development.

One final point to consider with regard to the teacher's role in learning is the effect that homeroom teachers have in the classroom. Students live up to the expectations of teachers. If regular teachers disregard English and do not participate fully in activities, students will develop a similar attitude. As the Ministry's guidelines acknowledge, "if the homeroom teacher takes a passive stance towards English, this may be passed on to the students" (MECSST: 138). Homeroom teachers can be a source of great support and should be utilized. They understand students and can help in developing

appropriate materials and activities. They can also provide continued exposure to English beyond the monthly lesson by introducing it into the daily classroom routine. In this way, students will approach learning English in an active way and see it as something that they can use.

CHAPTER FOUR

ILLUSTRATIVE THEME-BASED TEACHING MATERIALS

A sample thematic course as well as lesson plans and activities that illustrate what could flow from the conceptual base and rationale are presented in this chapter. These are based on my own experience, shared experiences with other teachers and a review and analysis of the literature.

The theme for the course is “My Changing Environment”. It has been divided into four units: spring, summer, fall and winter. This theme was chosen because Japan is season centered. Four distinct seasons are recognized, each one having special rituals, customs, related language, objects and thought patterns. The framework that the school year is based on is also seasonal. School begins in spring, April, and ends in winter, March. School events change with the seasons. For my students, who live in the countryside, seasonal differences are very pronounced. Basing the course and the topics in it on the changing seasons will give context and meaning to the language, and provide a framework to help students relate it to the world around them. The course is spread over one school year, from April to March, with one class per month. Each of the four season units contains three lessons. The theme and units are the same for all students from the first through the sixth grades. The sub-topics, language contained in them, and activities change.

Presenting a full course for one grade, from the theme through to lesson plans and activities, provides an idea of how the concepts and rationale developed for this paper are applied. The course that follows is designed for a first grade, pre-beginner class of fourteen, six-year old students. Included, is a complete description of the theme, sub-topics and language contained, a set of core activity ideas that are linked to Halliwell's five categories, and lesson plans for each of the twelve classes during the year. By the end of the course, students will have built language around the following sub-topics: greetings, introductions, animals, numbers, verbs, food, colors, feelings/emotions, clothing, parts of the body, seasons and weather.

The lesson plans are intended to provide a general idea of the way the lesson is structured, not a detailed plan. They contain descriptions of the learning objectives and language focus, as well as descriptions of activities used. The activities have been cross-referenced to Halliwell's five categories. The skills involved and the grouping format for each activity have also been noted.

Organization of the Theme

“My Changing Environment”

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
(April, May, June)	(July, August, September)	(October, November, December)	(January, February, March)
Sub-topics:	Sub-topics:	Sub-topics:	Subtopics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greetings, introductions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summer holidays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clothing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student-generated vocabulary related to spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbs related to what students do in the summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student generated vocabulary related to fall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parts of the body
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers from one to six 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student-generated vocabulary related to summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feelings and emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbs related to what students do in the winter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbs related to what students do in the fall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student-generated vocabulary related to winter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbs related to what students do in the spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s book, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • animals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weather and seasons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers from one to ten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s book, “Brown bear, Brown bear, what do you see?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s book, “The Jacket I wear in the Snow”

Classroom Language

A. Structures that students will begin to recognize and respond to:

- stand-up, sit down, make a circle, line-up, show me, let's go, stop, be quiet, listen, let's practice, wait a minute, let's make groups/pairs, come here, go back, move your desks/chairs, use a big/small voice, once more, do you have ____?, pack-up the ____, bring the ____ back, are you ready?.

B. Structures that students will begin to produce:

- ____ please, thank-you, you're welcome, can I have ____?, help me, I know/I don't know, I'm sorry, I'm ready/not ready, please wait, once more.

Vocabulary

Much of the vocabulary that forms the content of this course is chosen and generated by the students as the lessons progress. This provides flexibility and opportunities for student choice. For this reason, the vocabulary is not listed in detail here.

Language Structures

These language structures have not been made note of in the lesson plans. In some instances, it is obvious where they fit in. Others are intended as examples of language that could be included in the lessons when students demonstrate a readiness and need for the content to be expanded.

- hi, hello, good-bye, goodnight, good-morning
- I'm (name), nice to meet you
- I'm (verb +ing)
- I like ____, I don't like ____.
- I'm (feeling, emotion)
- How are you?
- It's (weather)

- What's this?
- I can (verb)

Constants in the Classroom

Although not noted specifically in the lesson plans, space should be made for letters and sounds to be worked with continually, in small pieces, for short periods of time as the need arises. There are also other short activities that can be worked into the routine of English class. These include things such as: doing oral and written work with the day, month, date and weather at the beginning of each class, developing a routine to recognize special holidays or students' birthdays, or having a different student take responsibility each week for choosing a new word which all students learn.

Role of the Homeroom Teacher

It is essential that the homeroom teacher bring English into the regular class so that students are exposed to it between monthly lessons. This does not mean teaching whole lessons. It can be achieved through presenting short, mini lessons using activities such as: the ones listed above in the constants section, having students read/peer teach their student-generated texts, the teacher reading storybooks again, singing English songs that students have learned, working with the posters that were developed during English class, or having students do a favorite activity again.

Grouping Activities

- * The numbers that appear after the game description are a reference to the activities in the lesson plan.
- * For example, 113 would be a reference to Unit 1, Lesson 1, Activity 3. The number 4103 would be a reference to Unit 4, Lesson 10, Activity 3.

Halliwell's Five Categories

<p>1. Activities that link understanding to an active response. Students will have to process language and do something as a result of what they hear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Card games – finding cards that match what is heard (113, 255)• Using dice to recycle language (124, 262)• Matching visuals and written words (243)• Matching numbers/visuals/realia to the words that are heard (263, 4103, 4123, 4124)• Storytelling – arranging visuals according to what is heard (393)• Matching what they see and hear to a visual (4113)
<p>2. Activities that involve guessing. These types of activities give students a reason to recycle language, respond to a challenge and stimulate the asking of questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Card games – guessing which card has been chosen (112)• Puzzles (244)• Guessing which visual has been hidden under cards, in a box/bag. (254, 391, 4101)
<p>3. Activities that involve the use of movement in meaningful and real language practice. These activities exploit the desire to move and be active.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total Physical Response (111, 123, 135, 241, 374, 4114)• Ball games – using/passing balls (115)• Passing visuals/vocabulary cards around the room (133, 251, 373, 381)
<p>4. Activities that increase the students' level of engagement by giving them a need to remember what they are hearing, saying, reading or writing. These activities use memory to create communication.</p>

- chain games – building a dialogue/vocabulary as it is said around a circle. (114)
- Using print to have students remember, search for and talk about letters. (245, 4104, 4112)
- Using cuisenaire rods as a means to remember/retell stories, vocabulary. (261, 264, 383)
- Card games – matching cards by remembering visual and location. (384, 392)
- Games where items are removed and then recalled. (4104)

5. Activities that engage students by requiring both language use and thinking. These activities give students mental space for both generating and organizing ideas that helps them make language their own.

- Using the student generated textbook. (116,121, 125, 131, 136, 242, 256, 265, 371, 372, 375, 385, 395, 4122, 4121, 4115, 4105, 4125)
- Generating/brainstorming/discussing language from visuals. (122, 132, 243, 252, 4111)

Lesson Plans

UNIT ONE

LESSON ONE - SPRING

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say vocabulary and structures associated with greetings, and a simple introduction.
- b. Students will create the title page and the first page of their student-generated textbooks.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary building centered on language associated with greetings and introductions.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Greetings – Large poster on board with four pictures that illustrate “hello/hi”, “goodbye/see you”, “good morning” and “good night”. Language is elicited from students through gestures and then practiced in a TPR sequence. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 2.) Card Game – Students are given cards with the pictures from the posters on them. They take turns choosing a card, doing a gesture and having their partner guess the greeting. (skills: speaking, listening format: pairs core activity category: 2)
- 3.) Card Game “Slap” – Each student works with a set of four “greetings” cards. The teacher says a greeting and the students must choose the appropriate card. (skills: listening format: individual core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Introductions – Students sit in a circle. Teacher introduces themselves to each student using “hi, I’m ____”. Next, a chain introduction is done where each student introduces themselves to the student beside them. The chain introduction is built and done over until it includes, “hi, I’m ____, nice to meet you, goodbye.” (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ pairs core activity category: 4)
- 5.) Ball Game – Students stand in a circle. Two balls are passed to music. When the music stops, the students holding the balls must introduce themselves to each other using a greeting, introduction

and closure. When that is completed, the music is played again, the ball is passed and the procedure is repeated with two different students. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ pairs core activity category: 3)

- 6.) Student-Generated Textbook – The greetings are written on the board next to each picture. Teacher and students read them together. A small version of the poster used in activity one is given to each student, they “write” a greeting of their choice next to the pictures. (skills: speaking, reading, writing format: whole group ⇒ individual core activity category: 5)

Outside of Class:

Students draw a picture of “spring” in their student-generated textbooks.

UNIT ONE

LESSON TWO – SPRING

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say vocabulary associated with spring, as well as the numbers from one to six.
- b. Students will create page two of their student-generated texts.

Language Focus:

Spring vocabulary, number from one to six.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Student-generated text: drawings of spring – Students are in a circle, student names something that they see in their picture, teacher says it in the target language and writes it on a poster along with the student’s name. Teacher and students read it together. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 2.) Spring visuals – Students look at the visuals of spring and find similarities and differences with their drawings. New vocabulary is marked on the visual using a cuisenaire rod, it is also written on to the previous poster in the same color as the rod that marks it. Vocabulary is recycled and practiced. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 3.) Numbers – The numbers from one to six are introduced using TPR. They are said in a round in the circle and then practiced again by rolling a large dice. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 4.) Dice Game – Vocabulary from the large poster is recycled through having students point to the related visual as they hear it. The class chooses their six favorite words and writes the numbers from one to six beside them. Students take turns rolling the dice, and saying the vocabulary that corresponds to the number while their partner points to it. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ pairs core activity category: 1)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbook – Students choose a word/s related to spring and write them beside their drawing. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

UNIT ONE

LESSON THREE - SPRING

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say vocabulary associated with animals and actions in the visuals of spring.
- b. Students will create page three of their student-generated text.

Language Focus:

Animal vocabulary, verbs related to what they do in the spring.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Student-generated textbook – Students peer teach each other a word from their books. Each student copies their favorite word from their friends' book into their own. (skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing format: small groups core activity category: 5)
- 2.) Spring visuals – The vocabulary from the visuals is re-elicited. Students are asked what animals they see and are asked to brainstorm what other animals they see in spring, this language is given to them in the target language. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 3.) Animal Cards – Students are in a circle, large picture cards of animals are shown to them and the vocabulary is re-elicited and practiced as the cards are passed around the circle. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category:3)
- 4.) Numbers and Animals game – Each group of students receives a spinner with animal pictures on it. The numbers from one to six are re-elicited. Students take turns spinning the spinner, saying the name of the animal that it lands on, and then counting the number of times they see that animal in the large spring visuals. (skills: speaking, listening format: small groups core activity category: 1)
- 5.) TPR – The actions of the people in the spring visuals are elicited and given to students in the target language. They are then practiced through TPR. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 4)
- 6.) Student-generated Textbooks – Students either draw a picture, or cut out a picture of their favorite animal. Teacher provides the written form for the students to copy. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

Outside of Class:

Students draw a picture of what they like to do in summer.

UNIT TWO

LESSON FOUR – SUMMER

Learning Objective:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say verbs associated with visuals, and the names of colors.
- b. They will also be able to practice writing and recognizing the letters s, u, m, e, and r.
- c. Students will create page four of their student-generated textbook.

Language Focus:

Verbs, colors, letters.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) TPR – Verbs from the spring are re-elicited through the visuals. Students are put in small groups and take turns gesturing while others guess the verb. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ small group core activity category: 3)
- 2.) Summer Drawings – Students are in a circle. Teacher asks what they like to do in the summer and provides the vocabulary in the target language. Students show each other their pictures and the language is recycled. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 3.) Summer Visuals – Large visuals of summer are displayed. Teacher elicits verbs for the actions people are performing in the visuals. As it's said, it's marked with a cuisenaire rod and the word is written on a poster paper in the same color. The vocabulary from the illustration is practiced along with the colors, students are asked to find the matching written words. Teacher and students read the words together. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 5,1)
- 4.) Puzzle – Smaller versions of the summer visuals have been cut up and made into puzzles. Students take turns choosing a piece, saying any vocabulary they know that is prompted by the picture. As the pieces of the puzzle are turned over the students can guess where they fit and make the visual. (skills: speaking, listening format: pairs core activity category: 2)
- 5.) Newspaper Activity – Each student is given a page from the English newspaper. Teacher shows students a letter, the students alternate between finding and circling it in the paper for thirty seconds and then writing it for thirty seconds. The letters used are s, u, m, e and r. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 4)

Outside of Class:

Students write the word/s for the action/s they depicted in their drawings of summer.

UNIT TWO

LESSON FIVE – SUMMER

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say color, fruit and number vocabulary associated with the storybook, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar”.
- b. Students will create pages five of their student-generated textbooks.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary associated with colors, numbers and fruit.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Color Cards – Students are in a circle. Cards with the colors written on them in color are elicited and passed around the circle. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 2.) Caterpillar/Butterfly Pictures – Vocabulary and knowledge associated with these pictures is elicited from students and discussed. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 3.) Storybook, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” – The first half of the story is read to students. During the second reading the teacher stops to elicit and recycle vocabulary that the students know. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Cover It Up Game – Students are in a circle. Large pictures with the fruit vocabulary from the book are passed around and said. Cards are then placed in the center of the circle. Large color cards are held up one at a time, the colors elicited and then the cards placed over the fruit pictures until all of the pictures are covered. Teacher asks “where is (color)?” and throws a ball to the student who wants to answer. Teacher asks “what’s under (color)?”, again throwing the ball to the student who wants to answer. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 2)
- 5.) Fruit , Number, Color Game – Students are in pairs and are given a set of fruit, number and color cards. The teacher reads the story again and the students must sequence the cards according to order, what fruit was eaten, the color of it and how many the caterpillar ate. (skills: listening format: pairs core activity category: 1)
- 6.) Student generated Textbook – Students draw or cut out a picture of their favorite fruit. They write the name of the fruit and the color. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

UNIT TWO

LESSON SIX – SUMMER

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say food and number vocabulary associated with the second half of the storybook, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar”.
- b. Students will create page six of their student-generated texts.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary building around the topics in the storybook.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Cuisenaire Rods – The first half of “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” is retold using rods to mark the color of the fruit and the number eaten. Teacher elicits what the students remember. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 4)
- 2.) Storybook, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” – The next part of the story read. The students are put into groups to practice the food vocabulary. The first six food pictures are matched with numbers. Students take turns rolling the dice and naming the corresponding vocabulary that the number matches while their partner points to the picture. Four new food items are introduced, students choose six out of the ten to practice using the dice. Teacher shows the food visual from the book and they read the names of the ten foods together. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ small group core activity category: 1)
- 3.) Numbers – Numbers from one to six are elicited through fingers. The numbers seven through ten are added and practiced. Teacher shows students the food picture from the second half of the book, students count the food items from one to ten. Teachers and students read together. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Storytelling – The whole story is told over, using the visuals and the cuisenaire rods, eliciting language from the students whenever possible. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 1)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbook – Students are given copies of the food picture from the storybook and are asked to color and write their favorite. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

Outside of Class:

Students draw a picture of fall in their student-generated textbook.

UNIT THREE

LESSON SEVEN - FALL

Learning Objective:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say vocabulary associated with fall and feelings/emotions.
- b. Students will create page seven of their student generated textbook.

Language Focus:

Building vocabulary associated with fall and feelings/emotions.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Student-generated Textbook – Each student points to a color they used in their drawing of fall, says it, and their book is passed around the circle while other students repeat it. Students then repeat the procedure using an object in their fall drawing. The vocabulary is written on a large poster by the teacher with the student’s name next to it. Teacher and students read the poster together while reinforcing the vocabulary by showing the visual again. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 2.) Student-generated Textbook – students write the word that they learned next to the object in their picture and read it to a friend. (skills: reading, writing format: individual ⇒ pair core activity category: 5)
- 3.) Feelings/Emotions – Students are in a circle. Large picture cards depicting feelings/emotions are introduced, passed around the circle and said. Gestures are introduced for each one and practiced through TPR. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 4.) Song, “Hello, how are you?” – A TPR song about feelings is introduced. Initially the teacher sings and students gesture, then they move to doing the echo and gesturing, and then singing and gesturing. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbook – Students choose a feeling that they associate with their fall drawing and write it in their book, and read both of the words written in this lesson to their partner. (skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing format: individual ⇒ pairs core activity category: 5)

UNIT THREE

LESSON EIGHT - FALL

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say vocabulary associated with feelings/emotions and verbs associated with the actions in visuals.
- b. Students will create page eight of their student-generated textbooks.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary associated with feelings and verbs about what the students do in fall.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Song, "Hello, how are you?" - the feelings/emotions are re-elicited using large picture cards. The song is sung again. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 2.) Face Game - Each group of students gets a set of cards identical to the large cards used in the song. They also get a bag of random faces cut out from pictures and magazines. Students take turns choosing a face, saying the feeling they associate it with and matching it with the appropriate card. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: small groups core activity category: 1)
- 3.) Fall Visuals - Large visuals of fall scenes are put on the floor. Students sit in a circle around them. Teacher first elicits the feelings of the people in the visuals. The verbs associated with what the people are doing are elicited next and marked with color rods. Words are written on a poster in the same color as the rod that marks it. They are practiced and read by teacher and students. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 4)
- 4.) Card Game, "Concentration" - Each group of students is given a set of small picture cards that match the verbs from the fall visuals. They play and take turns turning over two cards, trying to match two of the same visual, saying the verbs as they turn the cards over. (skills: speaking, listening format: small groups core activity category: 4)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbook - Students choose a face from activity number two to put in their text. They write the feeling associated with the face. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

UNIT THREE

LESSON NINE – FALL

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to generate vocabulary associated with feelings, colors, and animals.
- b. Students will create page nine of their student-generated text.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary associated with feelings, colors, and animals.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Feelings and Colors – Vocabulary is re-elicited through large cards. The visuals are hidden behind a card and slowly revealed, students must guess which one it is. Colors are re-elicited and students offer suggestions about which feeling they match. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 2)
- 2.) Animal Cards – Animal vocabulary which has appeared in the visuals is re-elicited, as it's said it is written underneath each animal. Students are given sets of animal cards, they color the animals the colors that they associate with them. They play the game "Concentration", focusing on turning over the cards and saying the colors and the animals, trying to match similar animals. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ small groups core activity category: 4)
- 3.) Storybook, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?" – Teacher reads the story to students, stopping to elicit the animal, color and feeling. As the story is repeated the teacher pauses so that students can provide as much of the language as possible and sequence cards depicting the animals in the order that they hear them. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Student-generated Textbook – Students choose or draw a picture of their favorite animal and write the word beside it. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

UNIT FOUR

LESSON TEN – WINTER

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say clothing vocabulary.
- b. Students will create page ten of their student-generated text.

Language Focus:

Clothing vocabulary, the verbs “put-on” and “take-off”.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Clothing Realia – Students brainstorm the names of clothing that they wear in the winter and try to guess what clothing is in the bag. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 2)
- 2.) “What’s Missing” Game – Clothing is put into the middle of the circle and the names re-elicited. Students close their eyes, teacher removes item/s, and students must guess what is gone. Gradually, student volunteers can remove the items and answer other students’ questions. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 4)
- 3.) Storybook, “The Jacket I wear in the Snow” – Students are put into two groups. Each group is given a bag full of clothing items that are used in the story. One student in each group is chosen to be “dressed up”. The teacher reads the story, students listen and put clothing items on the one student in the same order that they hear them. Teacher and students then read the book together again. (skills: speaking, listening format: small groups core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Clothing Poster – Clothing items are re-elicited from students and written on a large poster. Students are put into groups, teacher shows them a letter, each group must find and circle that letter somewhere on the poster. (skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing format: small groups core activity category: 4)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbooks – students draw a picture of their favorite clothing item and write the word underneath. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

UNIT FOUR

LESSON ELEVEN – WINTER

Learning Objectives:

- a. Students will be able to recognize and say vocabulary associated with winter and parts of the body.
- b. Students will create page eleven of their student-generated textbook.
- c. Students will begin to recognize and write the letters w, i, n, t, e, and r.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary building associated with the topics of winter and parts of the body.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Winter Visuals – Students brainstorm winter vocabulary from the visuals. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 2.) Newspaper Writing Activity – Students are given a page from the newspaper and have thirty seconds to circle as many of the same letter as they can find and thirty seconds to write as many of the same letter as they can. Letters used will be w, i, n, t, e, and r. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5,3)
- 3.) Parts of the Body – Students are given small copies of the winter visuals. Through TPR, teacher elicits parts of the body and asks students to find, circle and say them, and then asks them to count how many they found of each. (skills: speaking, listening format: pairs core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Song, “Head and Shoulders” - Teacher re-elicits parts of the body through TPR and models the song. Students follow along doing gestures and singing the words when they can, gradually the speed of the song is increased. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group core activity category: 3)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbooks – Students are given a small copy of a winter visual and asked to circle a part of the body and write the word. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

Outside of Class:

Students draw a picture of Christmas or New Year.

UNIT FOUR

LESSON TWELVE – WINTER

Learning Objective:

- a. Students will be able to generate vocabulary from all of the season visuals.
- b. Students will create page twelve and thirteen of their student-generated textbook.

Language Focus:

Vocabulary building around the topics of seasons and weather.

Sequence of Activities:

- 1.) Student-generated Textbook – Each student chooses one thing from their drawing, teacher providing the language if the student doesn't know it. Each student says their word and passes their book to the next student, who repeats it and passes it. The words are written on a poster, teacher and students read them together. (skills: speaking, listening, reading format: whole group core activity category: 5)
- 2.) Student-generated Textbook – Students write their word in the textbook. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)
- 3.) Season Visuals – Teacher tells the story of what is happening in each visual stopping to elicit vocabulary from the students and introducing vocabulary associated with weather. Students are given sets of small cards with weather pictures on them. Teacher tells the story again and the students sequence the cards in the order that they hear them. When the story is finished the words are recycled and read again. (skills: speaking, listening format: whole group ⇒ individual core activity category: 1)
- 4.) Board Game – Students play a board game with the weather and seasons vocabulary. They roll the dice and move along the playing board, if they land on a square that says “card” they choose a card, say the weather depicted on it and the group matches it with the season card that they associate it with. (skills: speaking, listening format: small groups core activity category: 1)
- 5.) Student-generated Textbook – Students draw a picture of their favorite weather and write the word beside their picture. (skills: reading, writing format: individual core activity category: 5)

STUDENT-GENERATED TEXTBOOKS
Illustrations and Vocabulary

Following, is a list of illustrations and vocabulary assigned during class that students are responsible for including in their texts. In addition to this, students can include any other pictures and writing that is important to them.

Title page:

Visual – student’s choice
Vocabulary – name

Page one:

Visual – faces from greetings poster
Vocabulary – greeting

Page two:

Visual – student’s spring drawing
Vocabulary – spring related vocabulary

Page three:

Visual – animal
Vocabulary – student’s favorite animal

Page four:

Visual – student’s summer drawing
Vocabulary – verb

Page five:

Visual – favorite fruit
Vocabulary – color and name of fruit

Page six:

Visual – food from the book, “The Very Hungry Caterpillar”
Vocabulary – favorite food

Page seven:

Visual – student’s drawing of fall
Vocabulary – object and feeling in their drawing

Page eight:

Visual – face
Vocabulary – feeling

Page nine:

Visual – animal from the book “Brown Bear”
Vocabulary – animal

Page ten:

Visual – clothing

Vocabulary – clothing name

Page eleven:

Visual – winter visual

Vocabulary – part of the body

Page twelve:

Visual – student's drawing of Christmas or New Year

Vocabulary – object in the drawing

Page thirteen:

Visual – weather

Vocabulary – favorite weather

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Based on the research literature, my teaching experience and the experience of others, this paper presents a teaching resource for use by those who are developing or have developed an English program for Japanese elementary school students.

The Ministry (MECCST) has suggested a framework and guidelines for implementing English programs at elementary schools from April of 2002 onward. Local Boards of Education are free to interpret these as they choose. At my schools, I have been given responsibility for developing a program that is fun, communicative and motivating for the students. The challenges inherent in my context, low contact hours, diverse levels of participation and interest amongst schools, teachers and students, and that of teaching a language that has little connection to students' lives, must also be addressed.

The teaching resource that I have developed makes use of the benefits of my context while also meeting the challenges that are present. It accomplishes this by being built upon the principles of connecting English to students' lives using theme-based teaching, and helping them take responsibility for their learning by creating lessons and activities that address different learning styles and enable them to learn language through the integration of the four skills in a meaningful context. The resource provides a rationale and conceptual base for

the elements that need to be present in order to create an integrated, engaging, motivating and meaningful English program for elementary school students. To illustrate how the rationale and concepts are applied, it also describes and presents activities and lesson plans for a one-year program for first grade students.

Creating this resource has helped me to articulate my beliefs about teaching and how children learn languages. It has also enabled me to develop a conceptual base to support a program that addresses the issue of what should be taught, serves the learners, and more fully develops the Ministry's suggested guidelines. Teachers in situations similar to my own may find all or parts of this resource, and the ideas contained in it, helpful in assisting in the development of their own programs. In this way, English education at Japanese elementary schools may live up to its potential and become a valuable, cohesive program that is based on the shared ideas and experiences of schools, teachers and students.

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